

VZCZCXRO8808
PP RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHFR #0965/01 1411559
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 201559Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3096
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1709
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 0883
RUEHLGB/AMEMBASSY KIGALI PRIORITY 1187
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 2305

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000965

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [AO](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE/ANGOLA: MAY 23 SARKOZY TRIP A STEP IN
IMPROVING RELATIONS

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 b/d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: French officials said that President Sarkozy's May 23 trip to Angola was intended as a further step in improving relations and in moving the relationship beyond the Falcone Affair and other legacies of the past. The French hope to establish new assistance programs in Angola that could serve as models for future programs in other developing countries. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) MFA Angola desk officer Carole Blestel and Presidential AF-advisor Romain Serman provided separate briefings on May 19 on President Sarkozy's May 23 visit to Angola. They said that the visit was a logical next step both sides had taken to improve relations since Presidents Sarkozy and Dos Santos met at the UNGA in New York in 2007. With the arrival of Sarkozy in office in May 2007, both sides looked at the present as an opportunity to move political relations out of the deep-freeze engendered by the Falcone Affairs (a still murky arms- and influence-peddling scandal dating to the Mitterrand and Chirac presidencies).

¶3. (C) In his usual frenetic style, Sarkozy will fly to Angola during the night of May 22, arriving the morning of the 23rd in Luanda for what the Angolans have labeled an "official state visit." Sarkozy will meet with Dos Santos, and then will be guest of honor at a luncheon hosted by the Angolan president. Sarkozy will meet with members of the French community in Angola ("mostly oil executives and their families," Blestel noted) and return to France the same day.

¶4. (C) Blestel and Serman said that the visit should lead to further steps to reactivate the political side of the relationship. They said that one of the Falcone Affair trials (perhaps the most noteworthy of all the trials) would begin in France in September 2008 and last possibly until February. The case involved some 42 defendants, including former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand (a son of the former President and himself a former Presidential AF-advisor), Jacques Attali, and other well-known figures. Serman stressed that while some information embarrassing to Angola might emerge from the trial, the inquiry and scandal were largely French-centric, with most of the defendants accused of violating French law. The case was not directed against Angola itself and never had been. Serman remarked that the Angolans had apparently come to a good understanding of the case because they agreed to Sarkozy's visit at this time even though it would have been easier to defer a visit until after the conclusion of the trial. Inviting Sarkozy now also showed that the Angolans placed confidence in him.

¶5. (C) Serman said that Sarkozy well understood the opportunities for revamping France's relations with a number of countries when he came to power in 2007. The arrival of a

new leader often provided a chance to houseclean. In Sarkozy's case, he had sought to improve relations with three countries whose poor relations with France predated the Sarkozy era. These were Angola (Falcone problem), Djibouti (the Borrel case), and Rwanda (the 1994 genocide and the 2006 Bruguiere Report). Serman said that Sarkozy had made progress on Angola and Djibouti. Rwanda was a different and special case, although even there, Serman said, Sarkozy had at least opened the window of dialogue a slight bit. The trip to Angola would hopefully signal a final end to the Falcone era and open the way towards better future relations.

16. (C) Serman said that the GOF had in mind a number of new ideas for channeling aid to Angola. He described a program whereby Angola could help select projects and co-finance them -- "It will no longer be just us coming in with our money telling them what to do," Serman said. Moreover, the French wanted to engage private businesses operating in Angola to participate. Serman said that oil company Total had agreed to help finance a number of school construction projects, and that Total and other French companies were considering ways that they could help partner future France-Angola development projects.

17. (C) Serman said that the development model he described -- co-selection and co-financing of projects with as much private sector buy-in as possible -- was something the French hoped to launch eventually in Angola and then in other aid-receiving countries in Africa and elsewhere. He said France wanted to get away from the old model of simply showing up with money and telling locals how it would be spent. The partnership would be more productive and would

PARIS 00000965 002 OF 002

help with the transfer of knowledge and technique as well. "This will clearly be something the Chinese can't and won't offer to Africans in the same way we will," Serman said with pride. He indicated that the French concept was in part designed to counter Chinese activities in Africa by making more appealing arrangements for recipients than they had been receiving from the Chinese.

18. (C) Blestel and Serman confirmed that Angola would be the only country Sarkozy would visit on this trip. He had planned to go to Angola in February, when he visited South Africa, but could not because of the crisis in Chad that month and related problems.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

STAPLETON